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Win over Afghans with food and shelter

Published Friday, Sept. 28, 2001, in the San Jose Mercury News

I was horrified by the destruction of the World Trade Center on Sept. 11. I immediately thought of retaliation and to ``nuke" them. But who were they, and where were they? After a few days, as the information unfolded, the thought of bombing innocent civilians in Afghanistan was not an option.

If we want to get rid of the Taliban, who are the protectors of Osama bin Laden, the people of Afghanistan must be shown that the United States and its allies are not the ``Great Satans," as depicted by the terrorists. The United States and its allies should set up refugee camps in Pakistan and other Muslim countries to provide safety, food, water and shelter for the Afghan people. Feed and shelter them in the name of Allah.

If enough people leave Afghanistan, as they are already leaving in droves, then we can go after the Taliban and the terrorists. We can then rebuild the country.

Irving C. Weill

Watsonville

THIS is the newest nightmare: America, my country, has become a terrorist. For fear of us, thousands of Afghans are fleeing their homes. We are creating a future of fear and hatred by threatening countries instead of renegade individuals. Our children will suffer the results for generations.

Bette Harada

San Jose

WE'RE all feeling frustrated -- we want to *do* something -- so how about some peaceful bombing?

Can we take a lesson from the Berlin airlift and drop packages of food, clothing, blankets, and medical supplies into those northern Afghanistan mountain refuges of the anti-Taliban people, who already have been ground into the Stone Age by war?

Give us something peaceful to do!

Jean Embree

Santa Clara

Give guns to pilots

SHOULD flight crews be armed? You bet!

They are already responsible for the lives of themselves, their passengers and who knows how many people on the ground. As demonstrated in New York and the Pentagon, hijackers are eager to die and take hundreds of people with them. In a life-or-death struggle, give the flight crews a better chance. It is neither feasible nor practical to have an air marshal on board each flight.

This really isn't a radical new idea. El Al has been doing it for years. For all the willing suicide bombers in that part of the world, when was the last time you heard of an El Al jet being hijacked?

Frank L. Messersmith

Cupertino

Honda's call for action

I was inspired by Congressman Mike Honda's recent commentary ("It's a time for unity, not lashing out," Opinion, Sept. 24). In keeping Honda's theme, I think Sept. 11 should be commemorated by a national day of remembrance, or perhaps even a new national holiday. It should be called "Unity Day" so we not only remember what happened that day, but also what we need to do to make sure it never occurs again.

Let us reach out to all peoples and nations so we can all better trust each other and be good neighbors. United we stand, divided we fall.

Tim Oey

Sunnyvale

WHAT a difference a few generations makes in the attitudes of elected officials.

After the attack and loss of lives at Pearl Harbor, I remember the citizens being urged to do the following: Remember and honor the thousands of dead Americans; support the military, and if you are a young man, enlist; and unite behind our leaders and work hard at home for victory.

Sadly, Mike Honda's recommended list of actions reflects the present liberal attitude of Americans that they should look inward and do the following: discuss issues of tolerance; host a "dialogue dinner"; and volunteer to help with teaching "diversity."

It appears that Honda and the Mercury News editorial board are more worried about the "feelings" of others than the simple fact that more than 6,000 Americans have been murdered on our own soil and that citizens should support our government in eliminating the terrorists.

Robert M. Eanes

Campbell

Unsettling questions

THERE are two thoughts that I have been wrestling with this past week.

First, if I or anyone else questions what our government is doing and why, will that be considered unpatriotic? Will this wave of nationalism inhibit free speech and discussion? Will we become what we are trying to overcome and eradicate?

Second, being very literal, am I correct in surmising that the United States is going to end all terrorism worldwide? I know that we have targeted Osama bin Laden first. But are we going to go after the terrorists in Palestine, Libya, Ireland, Spain, South America, Africa and Sri Lanka? When does a terrorist become a ``freedom fighter" or the other way around?

What happened Sept. 11 has altered America. I mourn the loss of so many. I'm grappling with the enormity of it and the unsettling future that is ahead of me and all of us.

As a veteran, I know the feelings and emotions that are now occurring with the forces deployed. And, my wish for them is that they never have to experience war.

Rick Healy

Boulder Creek

Tears come easily

I am 77 years old, and I cry a lot now.

Our country and our hearts have been torn apart. I cry for the thousands of families who can never know the closure of burying their loved ones. I cry for the heroic firefighters and police officers who lost their lives doing their jobs, trying to help others. I cry for Arab and Israeli children killed in a brutal argument over who belongs where and of what belongs to whom.

I cry for the multitudes of innocent peoples who will perish in the times to come. I cry for the ethnic minorities here at home who will be persecuted by the ignorant, misguided few because of their religion, or color of skin, or the way they dress.

The tears flow so easily now, unashamedly. America and much of the world grieves with me. If only the tears could wash away the fears, the uncertainty of what the future holds for us and generations to come. But what must be done will be done.

I cry a lot now.

Sheldon Lefton

San Jose

Coast-to-coast patriotism

ID like to say thanks to the Mercury News for publishing a picture of the American flag in your Sept. 14 edition. You asked your readers to please display the flag during America's darkest hour.

Due to the circumstances created by faceless monsters on Sept. 11, my son and I (as were many Americans) were unable to keep our travel plans. We were visiting my daughter and her family in Sunnyvale and were scheduled to fly back to Key West, Fla., on Sept. 12.

The flag you published traveled from coast to coast, taped to my rental car window -- 3,280 miles, from sea to shining sea.

I received many a salute, honk, smile and thumbs up during the entire trip.

Charles B. (Chuck) Hart III

Key West, Fla.

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